

8/3/77

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

FROM : Senior Review Officer/RRB
SUBJECT : Meeting of 2 August on SIGINT

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1. RRB and C/ISAS met with [redacted] OS consultant on SIGINT and related topics on 2 August. He said that SIGINT was a generic term embracing COMINT, ELINT, telemetry, beaconry and non-image light (i.e. lasers and infra-red). COMINT only requires special protection and handling because it is a perishable source, easily changed on short notice. NSA has supreme authority for COMINT in the United States but overall authority is diffused through international agreement. NSA is also responsible for codes and ciphers. It uses the generic term cryptology to encompass the concepts of cryptanalysis (code breaking) and communications security. The administration of COMINT material is established by the statute prohibiting release of such information, by international agreement, by NSCID 6, by DCID 6/3, and the Communications Intelligence Security Regulations (CISR) issued under the DCI's authority.

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2. It was [redacted] view that codewords are reserved for COMINT end product and for indicating the degree of success in the application of methodology (including the nature and use of equipment). Because NSA has paramount authority in this COMINT area, codeword material would be a potential category for blanket exemption from declassification.

3. In his judgment however, the generic term SIGINT should be avoided (especially since there was no such thing as SIGINTSEC). Instead ELINT and COMINT should be individually specified. ELINT information does not require the special protection required for COMINT, since radars are not easily replaceable and the basic equipment involved is not specialized in a sensitive manner. He believed that ELINT information collected and reported by CIA can be judged for declassification by CIA without reference to NSA. Similarly, he also believed that information marked "Handle via COMINT channels Only" without a codeword could be reviewed without reference to NSA because it discusses activity, not an end product or degree of success.

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4. He also mentioned that the DCI totally controls [redacted] and TK. In former days, the CIA SIGINT Officer had oversight for Agency SIGINT responsibility but the last incumbent [redacted] was not replaced when he retired. This responsibility is now with the DDI Liaison Control Group, which consults NSA when faced with major problems. He felt that the basic question to be raised is "What effect will the declassification of 30-year old records in this area have on current operations?" As an

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example, he discussed the [redacted] His discussions were limited to the methodology. Content analysis to identify inferred sources was another matter and a basic problem in the review.

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